

A Rapid Tour  
of a Fast (Sometimes), Cheap (Maybe)  
& (Definitely!) Out of Control Path  
to Interdisciplinary, Engaged  
Scholarship and Teaching

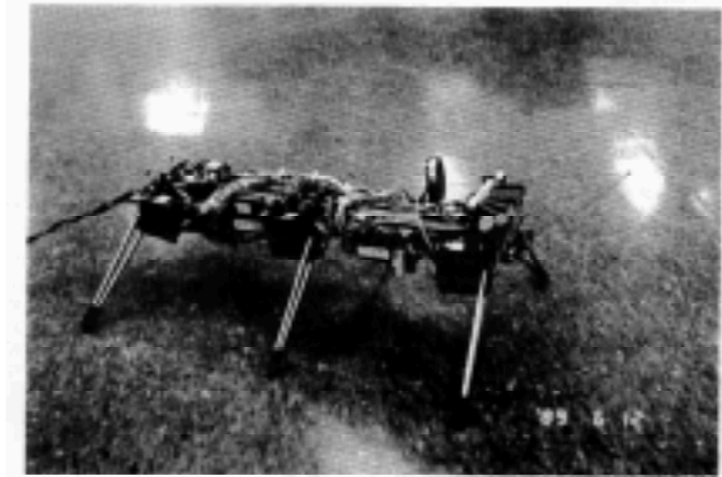
David Syring,  
Associate Professor of Anthropology  
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## **FAST, CHEAP AND OUT OF CONTROL: A ROBOT INVASION OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM**

RODNEY A. BROOKS and ANITA M. FLYNN  
MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab\*, Cambridge, MA, USA.

Complex systems and complex missions take years of planning and force launches to become incredibly expensive. The longer the planning and the more expensive the mission, the more catastrophic if it fails. The solution has always been to plan better, add redundancy, test thoroughly and use high quality components. Based on our experience in building ground based mobile robots (legged and wheeled) we argue here for cheap, fast missions using large numbers of mass produced simple autonomous robots that are small by today's standards (1 to 2 Kg). We argue that the time between mission conception and implementation can be radically reduced, that launch mass can be slashed, that totally autonomous robots can be more reliable than ground controlled robots, and that large numbers of robots can change the tradeoff between reliability of



# Defining the Agricultural Landscape of the Western Lake Superior Region

## Realities and potentials for a healthy local food system for healthy people

Summary of Results  
Funded by the Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute  
Dept. of Food Science and Nutrition  
University of Minnesota



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### Research Components and Goals

The goal of this research was to describe the agricultural landscape of a fifteen county area in Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin, including its capacity to provide food for the regional population. There were four components to the research: geographic information system (GIS) analysis was used to describe the land-use of the region and its capacity for regional crops; in-depth ethnographic interviews with farmers documented their current practices and informed of challenges and potential for expanded production; the creation of a "regional pattern" diet and the capacity to produce it in comparison to the Standard American Diet (SAD), and finally, an economic analysis to describe the impact a local food system can have on the sustainability of the Western Lake Superior Region. These four components were completed; some minor modifications are discussed in methods and results below.

# Exploring the Potential for a More Local Food System in the Western Lake Superior Region

by David Syring

**Abstract:** Local and regional food has emerged as an important arena for economic development and for social change. The western Lake Superior region offers significant opportunities and unique challenges for the redevelopment of a robust regional food system. This article summarizes research on several key elements related to possibilities for expanding the local food system in the region. It presents data about the available land base that could contribute to food production in the region; insights based on in-depth interviews with farmers who already grow food in the region, including policy ideas that they offered to support the work of growing more local food; and findings from a regional survey of citizens regarding their willingness to purchase local foods. The author concludes with a discussion of policy possibilities for supporting the regional food system. The research upon which this article is based was supported by grants from CURA's Faculty Interactive Research Program and the University of Minnesota's Healthy Food, Healthy Lives Institute.

Every day, we make a collective decision supporting food systems that challenge our physical, economic, and social health. We are more overweight, less wealthy, and less connected as a community than we could be if more of our food was produced closer to home.

With a population of just under 480,000 people, the western Lake Superior region<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1) generates nearly \$1.2 billion a year in economic activity from food purchases.<sup>2</sup> Of

<sup>1</sup> The western Lake Superior region is a 15-county area located in northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. This regional designation follows the one developed by the Lake Superior chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association. The rationale for including these counties in the study described in this article is that they share similar climate, cultural histories, and geographic focus distinct from that of more distant urban centers.

<sup>2</sup> This economic estimate is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate of mean annual consumer unit spending (about \$6,129 per 2.5-person household in 2010). Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Consumer Expenditures—2011," Economic news release, September 25, 2011. Available at [www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm).



Photo courtesy of David Syring

**A locally adapted diet could take advantage of a greater variety of foods than are normally eaten under an industrialized system of production. Winter squash—with its many colors, shapes, textures, and tastes—grows well in parts of the region, and some varieties keep well all year when stored in a cool, dry location. A community root cellar or storage warehouse could make it possible for even those residents with limited space in their homes to store many of the crops that do well in the region.**

course, most of that money goes to companies with no connection to the region, so these purchases do not contribute as much to the local economy as they could. In addition, the current global food-production model emphasizes large-scale commodity production that results in immense quantities of apparently cheap raw materials for the industrial creation of processed products. The resulting system, rich in calories but unbalanced in nutrition, contributes to a growing set of health problems in the United States, as well as around the globe.

National statistics on obesity and diet-related health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and others, are not promising. In 2009, an astounding 63.4% of U.S. citizens were categorized either as overweight or obese (36.2% overweight,

27.2% obese). This health crisis translates into considerable costs, as obese individuals pay 42% (\$1,429) more per year for healthcare than normal-weight individuals. The mean cost is even higher for recipients of Medicare who are obese (\$1,723). In 2006, extra medical spending due to obesity in the United States was \$40 billion, with projected growth in medical costs due to obesity to grow to \$147 billion per year and beyond over the following few years.<sup>3</sup>

The "Bridge to Health" surveys that have been conducted in the western Lake Superior region every five years since 1995 show numbers that compare slightly favorably to averages for both

<sup>3</sup> E.A. Finkelstein, J.G. Trogdon, J.W. Cohen, and W. Dietz, "Annual Medical Spending Attributable To Obesity: Payer- and Service-Specific Estimates," *Health Affairs* 28, 5 (2009): w822–w831.

## Citizen Perspectives on Mining in the Lake Superior Watershed Project Report

12/20/13

### Prepared by

Dr. David Syring, Associate Professor of Anthropology  
University of Minnesota Duluth  
dsyring@d.umn.edu; (218) 726-8317

### Summary of Recommendations

XXXXXXXX occupies a unique place in the ecology of groups that work on issues of concern to the Great Lakes. Given the proximity of XXXXXXX's mission to the concerns of everyday citizens, the organization is well-poised to make use of the findings of this research. In light of the information that follows this summary, I recommend considering the following potential action items as you plan how to proceed in relation to mining in the region. No current sources of information about mining are seen by citizens as worthy of trust. XXXXXXX could best serve the region by acknowledging the complexity of the issue of mining, and seeking to communicate about these complexities in a [more full](#) manner than | current players offer. The report that follows this summary of recommendations presents some of the key themes that emerge from the data collected for this project. The data presented provides justification for the recommendations presented here.

#### 1) Focus on creating spaces and unique opportunities for full conversations about the impacts of mining.

The participants in this research strongly voice the opinion that such spaces do not currently exist. Public forums and hearings are perceived as biased either in favor or against mining, with very little room for actually engaging with important questions about decision-making related to resource use. In addition, participants perceive that media outlets present the complexities of decision-making in a manner that simplifies the story to be one of "jobs vs. the environment." The citizens we talked to are hungry for opportunities to collectively consider the more nuanced balance needed to resolve critical resource use decisions in our society.

#### 2) Consider creating an ambitious set of discussion groups throughout the region subject to mining development.

The discussion groups we conducted were intended to gather information, but participants

statements for coded topics. Full transcripts of the sessions are also available, but I have not included them here in order to conserve space in this report.

Code	Number of coded statements
<b>Economics</b>	
Local v. Nonlocal	63
General Statements on Economics	53
Short-term v. Long-term	40
Infrastructure Impacts	19
<b>Environmental Concerns</b>	
Water	35
Health impacts	23
Wildlife	22
Air quality	5
<b>Monitoring and Remediation</b>	
Need for monitoring	55
Remediation concerns	30
New mining/new methods	13
<b>Attachments &amp; Values</b>	
Engaged/engagement with topic	44
Need for balance	27
Sense of place/value of nature	20
Personal/family connection to mining	17
Value of discussion groups	7
<b>Sources of Information</b>	
Identifying sources	50
Problem of source reliability/trust	50
History of mining as source	17
<b>Total Number of Coded Statements</b>	<b>590</b>

**Table 1: Inductive Codes**

Codes reflect categories arrived at through an open, inductive process. David Syring developed the coding system after receiving input from research assistants, Sheamus Johnson and Brandi Balmer, who completed all transcriptions. Codes are not mutually exclusive—the same statement may be coded for more than one topic. Full sets of statements for any coded category can be provided upon request.

In addition, participants individually sorted a list of topics into their preferred order of priorities. We did not discuss these priorities directly; this exercise was intended to direct attention to the complexities of making resource use decisions. Summarized results for this exercise are found in Table 2.

**Table 2: Priorities Sorting**

The results of this exercise are interesting in that they suggest people's greatest concerns about mining are those that directly affect human beings rather than those that affect wildlife or habitat. This has significant implications for planning outreach and communications work regarding mining, as identified above in Recommendation #3.

Area/Topic	Average Weight (1= Highest Priority)
Good Health	2.21
Clean Water	3.34
Fresh Air	3.71
Safe Home	3.79
Nutritious Food	4.50
Natural Habitat	6.07
Meaningful Job	6.43
Community Harmony	7.07
Abundant Wildlife	8.14
Material Possessions	9.64

**Energy, Water, & Community Engagement: A transdisciplinary approach to research & teaching**  
(PI: Hill)

**Energy, Water, & Community Engagement: A transdisciplinary approach to research & teaching**

**Project Team:**

- Elizabeth Hill (ehill@d.umn.edu) – Chemical Engineering (PI) – Coordinator of open ideation sessions to the broader UMN community. Oversight of the undergraduate researchers' time.
- Melissa Maurer-Jones (maujones@d.umn.edu) – Chemistry (co-I), Undergraduate researcher job solicitation. Participation in proposed Community Partner Meetings.
- David Syring (dsyring@d.umn.edu) – Anthropology (co-I), data collection of interactions between partners and STEM researchers; mentorship of the anthropology student researcher.

**Abstract:** This proposal aims to catalyze an interdisciplinary research platform to pursue innovative energy research in conjunction with Western Lake Superior regional public services. The mini-grant, if awarded, shall allow community partners to plan in detail potential collaboration opportunities with the faculty research team. This is the first phase of a plan to develop a new course that couples teaching with identifying best practices for transdisciplinary service learning and research to advance sustainable energy within the region and beyond.

**Description:**

We propose to create a learning and research program that draws on transdisciplinary methodologies [1] to serve community needs while advancing student success in pragmatic contexts related to energy management [2]. The long-term objectives of this work are to:

- Create a model for leveraging student and faculty transdisciplinary research to address significant community sustainable energy needs

## Digital Storytelling Workshops

*Since the development of our three day workshop model in the 1990s, we have helped some 20,000 people conceive and create digital stories. The genre, a two to four minute short video – deeply personal, elegantly presented – has become a new form of communication, ideal for the social media world we now inhabit.*





technopelli  
tales  
#1

# technopelli tales #3: ana victoria





Digital storytelling provides powerful active learning and civic engagement opportunities. Digital story projects can be incorporated into traditional, blended, flipped, and online courses in many disciplines. In this hands-on, 2-part workshop, you will receive guidance, resources, and support within our workshop community to create your own digital story. Please bring your own laptop (not tablet) to each session. Light refreshments provided. We will showcase completed stories on April 29th.

## Part I

Tues April 15, 2:00 - 3:30pm  
Library 410 Active Learning Lab

## Part II

Tues April 22, 2:00 - 3:30pm  
Library 410 Active Learning Lab

## Showcase

Tues April 29, 2:00 - 3:30pm  
KSC Garden Room

# Digital Storytelling Workshop

Presented by: Mitra Emad & David Syring

Campus Workshops  
on Digital Storytelling  
For Faculty and Staff



# West Grand Boulevard Collaborative

To foster the development and stability of a vital West Grand Boulevard community

[« Older Entries](#)

## Welcome to the WGBC Website

January 1st, 2010 | Author: Mildred Hunt Robbins



In October, 2004, Mildred Hunt Robbins and Tommie E. Robbins, Jr., telephoned their neighbors with the hope of addressing community issues on West Grand Boulevard. The first call to Henry Ford Hospital was directed to Security Officer, Captain John Weigle, and resulted in the scheduling of the first meeting of what would become the West Grand Boulevard Collaborative, a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) corporation registered with the Internal Revenue Service on June 13, 2005. The founding meeting was hosted by HFH in the Clara Ford Pavilion on October 28, 2004. The meeting ended with a consensus that our shared concerns would best be addressed through cohesive community action.

Since then, the WGBC has met on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month at 2:30 p.m. Our monthly meetings are hosted by WGBC Members on a rotating basis.



### Mission

*To partner with neighbors and supporters to uplift and stabilize our community at the highest level of safety and aesthetic appeal, and to enhance and support good stewardship of natural resources.*

### Vision

*To initiate, implement and foster community development through programs and projects that create and support safety and beautification using low-impact and sustainable infrastructure, landscape improvements and eco-friendly stormwater management strategies that incorporate public art, and*

### Please Support Us

[Become a Member](#)

[Renew Membership](#)

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### Follow Us



### Thank You

WGBC wishes to thank its Supporting and Sustaining members:

[Detroit Area Agency on](#)

[Aging](#)

[Henry Ford Hospital](#)

See a full list of our [Member Organizations](#)

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- Michael Wesch 1
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David Syring

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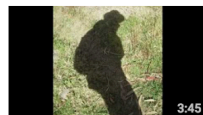
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# Anth 4633: Ethnobotany



**Participatory  
Film-Making  
with Local Farmers**

ANTH 4633: ETHNOBOTANY FALL 2013

PRESENTS



A close-up photograph of dark, rich soil, likely compost or mulch, showing a dense network of fine roots and organic matter. The soil is dark brown to black, with some lighter brown fibers and small pieces of wood or bark visible. The texture is crumbly and moist.

# **NORTHERN ROOTS**

**Growing Food in the  
Western Lake Superior Region**

A PARTICIPATORY  
MEDIA LAB  
PRODUCTION

OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIOLOGY-ANTHROPOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH




Available for  
streaming on Vimeo

AN  
“ETHNOBOT”  
ORIGINAL FILM



Directed by  
David Syring



Caitlin Nielson  
Student Director





# THE WESTERN LAKE SUPERIOR REGION



7%

OF OUR FOOD

IS

GROWN & EATEN

LOCALLY

93%

OF OUR FOOD

ISN'T  
GROWN & EATEN  
LOCALLY



IN ENTERTAINMENT DELIGHT!  
**BREAKFAST**  
AT **TIFFANY'S**  
HOW-SHEPHERD  
PRODUCTION

**Community Premier of  
Northern Roots:  
Growing Food in the West  
Lake Superior Region**



LOCAL VIEW

CARTOONIST'S VIEW

# Re-localizing our food makes the best kind of sense



David Syring

**H**arnessing the excitement, energy and engagement of young people provides my first argument for re-localizing our

### If you go

**What:** Premiere of the film, "Northern Roots: Growing Food in the Western Lake Superior Region," which profiles four local growers and highlights challenges and opportunities for local food production

**When:** An open house with the growers is from 4:30 p.m. Wednesday until the 7 a.m.



Monte Wolverton / Cagle Cartoons

# Going local

## Video makes farming hip

BY ALOYSIA POWER  
Multimedia Editor

When UMD Anthropology professor David Syring was awarded the Chancellor's Strategic Initiative Fund for his Ethnobotany class last fall, his goal was to connect his students with the local community through a storytelling project. He put video cameras in his students' hands, connected them with local farmers and directed them towards helping these people tell their stories.

"The idea is that farmers have amazing stories to tell and the community has amazing stories to tell," Syring said. "And it's a video world that we live in. People are visual."

What blossomed in his classroom grew and matured in Duluth's green farming fields and was cultivated and turned into a film called "Northern Roots: Growing Food in the Western Lake Superior Region."

The documentary looks into Duluth's local food system through the stories of four different region-



Duluth's Seeds of Success workers show off their fresh produce last fall. The urban farming project provides transitional employment growing vegetables to unemployed Duluthians. CAPTAIN N SUBMITTED

## Duluth Community Plant Story Map

and interviewed our community members. Later in this story, you'll see excerpts from this open house, which included Debora Shubat, Francois Medion, Eric Ament and Jana Studelska. We intend to hold similar Open Houses in the future. Thanks to these folks, and to Deborah Pomeroy from [UMD's Olga Lakela Herbarium](#), for generously sharing your knowledge.

### How to Comment/Contribute to this Map's Improvement

Going forward, we hope to add to and improve this resource through student and community effort. Contact [dsyring@d.umn.edu](mailto:dsyring@d.umn.edu) if you would like to contribute your expertise to improve this map, or have questions or corrections to offer.

Here's a short radio piece about this [Story Map on KUMD's Green Visions](#) program.

### Speckled Alder (*Alnus incana*)

Entry by Sara Posluszny



Listen Live · KUMD  
The House is Rockin'



Northland Morning

# 11/11 Green Visions: creating a "story map" of local plants

By LISA JOHNSON • NOV 11, 2015



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David Syring and some of his students harvesting a local favorite - blueberries!

CREDIT DAVID SYRING



What plants do people pay attention to?

What plants have a traditional use as food or medicine?

David Syring's Ethnobotany students are not only looking into that very topic, they're creating a "story map" with the information.

A story map



# Duluth Community Plant Story Map

## Ecology

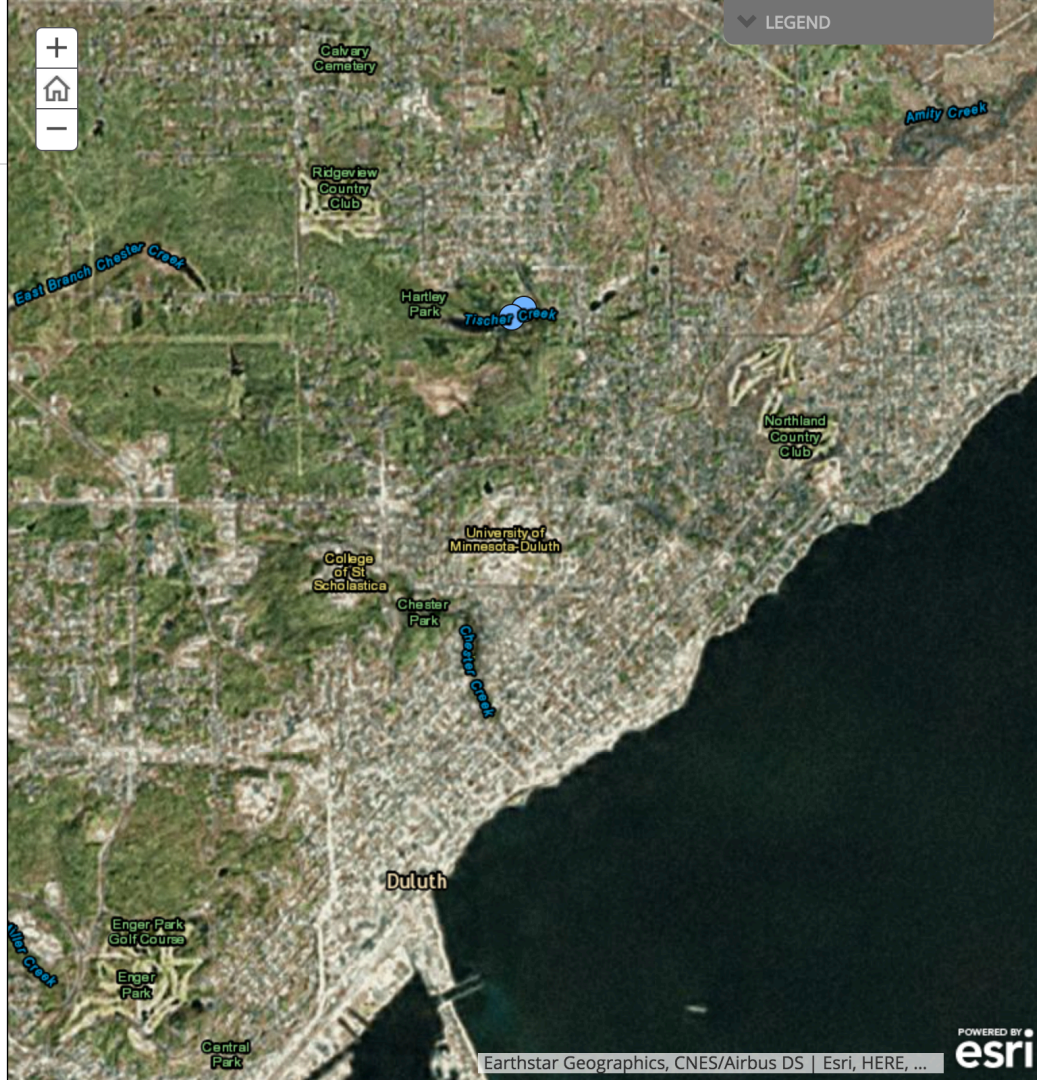
White pine provides food and shelter for forest birds and small mammals, such as squirrels. These animals eat the white pine's seeds. Bald eagles build their nests in white pine, usually on a main branch just below the crown top of the tree. Black bear mothers and their cubs spend most of their time from April to May within a 600 foot radius of a specific white pine that provides a habitat for them.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/pinstr/all.html>

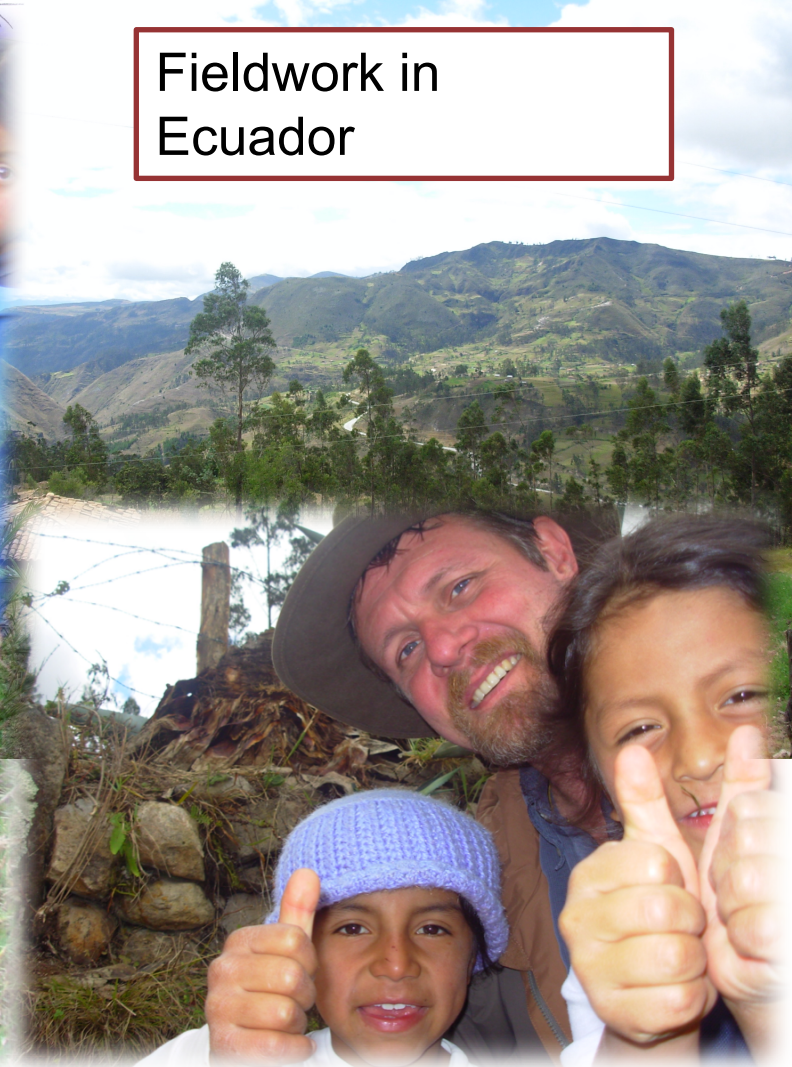


## Fire Resistance

White pines are moderately fire resistant, and their relatively high population in the Boundary Waters Area increases the average interval between forest fires:



# Fieldwork in Ecuador



# Fieldwork in Ecuador





WITH THE  
**SARAGUROS**

*The Blended Life in a  
Transnational World*

.....  
DAVID SYRING

A group of people, likely from a traditional community, are walking across a grassy field. They are wearing traditional clothing, including white blouses with black skirts and black blouses with white pants. Some are wearing large, patterned hats. The background shows a hilly landscape with trees and mountains under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Writing with Bodies  
in Digital Space:  
Performance  
as Participatory Poetics**

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Radio Frontera Sur (91.7) de Saraguro con Leidy Cango y Freddy Guailas	11,762	Jul 19, 2015
Introduction Part 1 A Norse Story of the Creation of the World	2,982	Jun 7, 2014
La Musica De Misael	2,801	Jul 9, 2015
Minga para la Cosecha del Maíz	1,420	Jul 17, 2015
Misael y su Chochón	1,378	Jul 15, 2015
Carving a Headboard	868	Mar 8, 2013
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**Writing with  
Speech and  
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**Media Genre:  
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Participatory Film Making with  
Women's Cooperative in Ecuador



# La Cooperativa Teresa de Calcuta



Participatory Film Making with  
Women's Cooperative in Ecuador



**A Dream**



Participatory Film Making with  
Women's Cooperative in Ecuador



**Handcrafts**



Participatory Film Making with  
Women's Cooperative in Ecuador



**and Livelihoods  
of the Members**



Participatory Film Making with  
Women's Cooperative in Ecuador



**A film by  
David Syring &  
Manuel Benigno Cango**





## International Indigenous Beadwork Gathering: A Cultural Exchange

Moira Villiard • Sep 13, 2016 • 1 Comment • Share



Visiting artists Petrona Guaillas, Victoria Sarango and Paulina Gonzalez said that visiting with beadwork artists from the area was the highlight of their stay. *Photo by Caitlin Nielson.*

September is shaping up to be a busy month at the American Indian Community Housing Organization. This past Thursday a trio of indigenous beadwork artists from Saraguro, Ecuador visited. They are members of the cooperative Las Mujeres de Teresa de Calcuta and widely known for their netted necklaces.

Here is a brief video introducing the larger cooperative, La Mega, that the women are part of.

Thursday's event was coordinated by myself and David Syring of the University of Minnesota Duluth. At AICHO, we invited a variety of indigenous beadwork artists from our region to meet with the women to share their experience as both artisans and original peoples. The gathering left lasting impressions on all who attended.



Beadwork brought in by the visiting artists. *Photo by Caitlin Nielson.*



The women of Saraguro meet local artisan Ness Sagatow of **Sags Beadwork**, one of several lasting connections that were made at the event. *Photo by Caitlin Nielson.*





**AICHO**  
American Indian Community  
Housing Organization

Honoring Our Resiliency  
*in Duluth, Minnesota*

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This full color calendar  
with stunning photography  
makes a great gift...

and, you support AICHO  
with your purchase!



The 2017 Calendar is now available!  
**AICHO 2018 Calendar: Through Our Eyes**